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ORAL EXAMINATION OF APPLICANTS FOR CAREER SERVICE

I. PROBLEMS:

1. The widely divergent views held by Agency officials on the concept, application and method of conducting oral examinations indicate a need to establish basic principles before proceeding further to implement the program. In order to isolate the principles which require resolution, an attempt has been made to analyze the individual problems involved in the overall problems of establishing the oral examination program.

2. A hasty analysis appears to disclose the following basic problems:

a. To define the proper purpose and scope of an oral examination relative to all other more factual means of testing and evaluating personnel.

b. To isolate those specific criteria of character and personality which are considered to be truly contributory to successful career service and to apply these same criteria consistently to all testing and evaluating techniques to be used.

c. To develop interrogation techniques specifically designed to elicit from the individual information disclosing the relative presence or absence of these criteria.

d. To train the board or panel of examiners in the concepts of oral examination and the proper use thereof to ensure in so far as possible consistency in the conduct of examinations and the interpretation of information elicited from the individual.

e. To determine the most practical and economic method of establishing an effective oral examination facility in CIA. In this connection, the method selected must only be determined in relationship to other personnel appointment policies and testing mechanisms which can be adopted or improved to minimize the workload or need for oral examinations.

2. A general prerequisite to any method of testing personnel is the determination of the criteria considered truly significant to successful performance in the job. With regard to the selection of individuals for career service in contrast to selection for a given position, oral examination should be restricted to:

a. Objective analysis of the subjective qualities of character and personality considered essential or truly contributory to successful career service.

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4. Essential qualities and characteristics, whether positive or negative, must be isolated and examination techniques developed which will elicit information disclosing the degree of presence or absence of these qualities.

5. The career service concept, involving as it does, continuous service for an unknown number of years in an unforeseeable number of positions and capacities, recognizes absolutely no differences in the qualities of character and personality considered significant regardless of the initial grade, age or rank of the individual.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The selection of personnel for career service warrants maximum exploitation of every known mechanic for the long range appraisal and evaluation of personnel for the following reasons:

a. The accumulation of experience and know-how acquired routinely by Agency personnel is irreplaceable and should be conserved by selection of personnel of career potential.

b. Turnover of personnel constitutes an ever-increasing hazard for the disclosure of clandestine operations, techniques and methods. Turnover caused by faulty selection should accordingly be minimized to the greatest possible extent.

c. The accumulative investment of the Agency in the formal training of personnel is a costly asset which should be conserved.

2. Oral examination is merely one technique for the appraisal and evaluation of personnel. As such it should never attempt to measure, ascertain or contradict characteristics, capabilities, experience and qualifications in general which can be proven more factually by investigation of the individual's personal history or by scientific or written testing mechanisms.

III. EXAMINATION PRINCIPLES

1. Examinations must be conducted in a friendly but dignified manner in a conducive environment. A single skilled interrogator should be responsible for the continuity, direction and pertinency of the examination. The interrogator must have previously studied all clues to character and personality which are revealed in all other testing, investigative or personal history examinations.

2. Examinations, although basically directed by a skilled interrogator should be attended, participated in and evaluated by representatives of the Agency at large as co-examiners. These co-examiners should be superior representatives selected because they represent unusually well-rounded, experienced personnel who are exceptionally free from prejudice class, old-school-tie, and social leanings, and in general are objective and responsive judges of character and personality. Examiners should also represent persons of widely divergent types, backgrounds to avoid the fatal error of natural bias toward persons in their own image.

3. In establishing a conducive atmosphere for oral examinations, an effort should be made to ages of the examiners with that of the candidate in order to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect.

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IV. MODIFYING FACTORS

1. Before adopting an oral examination program consideration should be given to the possibility of revising and amending existing personnel policies which might greatly reduce the cost of an oral examination program and simultaneously increase its effectiveness. To illustrate:

a. The major cost of oral examinations (travel expense to and from Washington) can be eliminated if the selection of personnel for career service is delayed until after a probationary period of service. Such a probationary period is presently inherent in all new appointments but in practice it is practically worthless. If these probationary periods were effectively exploited in conjunction with a sound evaluation and elimination system, the career service program would be far more realistic and effective. Such a program would eliminate the need for an oral examination system; to the contrary the absence of such an effective probationary program greatly increases the need for and importance of pre-employment oral examination.

2. Another highly significant personnel policy which has been proposed by the Assistant Director Personnel has tremendous potential for furthering the Career Service concept. It also would greatly effect the importance and practicability of oral examinations in the career selection process. The proposed policy is to give "term" or "temporary" appointment to all personnel who have not been selected for career service. Under this concept an employee would remain a temporary employee indefinitely so long as a need for his services existed unless he were selected for indefinite career status. Under this policy oral examinations could be restricted to the testing and evaluation of personnel under consideration for career selection.

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